

More than one million Nebraskans, and all Iowans, can dial it. Nationwide, about 65% of Americans currently have access to it. Now, the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives are considering measures that would make dialing "2-1-1" a reality for all Americans.

2-1-1 is an easy to remember telephone number that connects people with important community services and volunteer opportunities. Whether a caller is looking for day services for an elderly relative, after school programs for kids, or low-cost counseling, 2-1-1 is the place to call to find available services close to home. Nebraska's 2-1-1 call center, hosted by United Way of the Midlands, also serves eight counties in southwest Iowa.

On Tuesday, February 13th in Washington, D.C., members of Congress and representatives of United Way and the Alliance of Information and Referral Services (AIRS) will celebrate national 2-1-1 Day and the introduction of the "Calling for 2-1-1 Act" (HR 211 /S 211). The news conference is set for 9:30 am eastern (8:30am Central) in Room S-120 at the U.S. Capitol.

Among the speakers will be Jamie Moore, vice president for Volunteer and Community Services for United Way of the Midlands. Moore oversees Nebraska's only 2-1-1 call center. She is also incoming national board chair for AIRS.

Moore will be joined by Brian Gallagher, President and CEO of United Way of America (UWA) and Rodney Slater, Board Chair of UWA. Among the bills' sponsors in attendance will be Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA). Co-sponsor Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) has not yet confirmed her attendance. 119 other legislators have signed on in widespread bipartisan support of the bills, including Sen. Chuck Hagel (R) and Rep. Lee Terry (R) of Nebraska,

and Sen. Tom Harkin (D) and Rep. Leonard Boswell (D) of Iowa.

The Calling for 2-1-1 Act of 2007 would authorize \$600 million over six years to assist states with implementing and sustaining 2-1-1 statewide. States would have to provide a 50 percent match to the grant, which could come from current 2-1-1 funding in the community, such as United Way funding, funding through other non-profits, state and local government, foundations and businesses. Funding would be administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Nebraska's 2-1-1 effort is a public-private partnership that includes Nebraska United Ways, county and regional health departments, the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. The Nebraska Public Service Commission is the governing body.

2-1-1 is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is a free call. Some cell phone companies and private businesses do not currently provide access to 2-1-1, but callers can reach the center by dialing (402) 444-6666.

United Way of the Midlands celebrates 84 years of caring service in 2007 by mobilizing the caring power of people who live and work in Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawattamie Counties. United Way-funded programs change people's lives and make an impact on community conditions. Through 2-1-1, United Way connects people with the local services they need, by phone and over the web. United Way recruits and refers volunteers of all ages, and builds partnerships that improve the quality and delivery of human services across the metro area.

